



1714
Chimney

A DRAMATIC PRESENTATION
OF LONGFELLOW'S POEM
THE GOLDEN MILESTONE

by

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Director of Mothers and Daughters

Theme Refrain

Each man's chimney is his Golden Mile-Stone
Is the central point from which he measures every distance
through the gateways of the world around him.

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Price Five Cents

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General Mission Board
Church of the Brethren
22 South State Street
Elgin, Illinois

CHIMNEYS

Cast of Characters:

Reader, pianist, soloist, and quartet
An old man
Two lovers
A man and wife about 30 years of age or less
A man and wife, three girls ranging in ages under twelve
An elderly woman

Properties:

A fireplace with candles lit upon it
A picture of a little boy upon it also
A table with an old album on it, also a pair of little boy's shoes and sample
of silver ware, also modern photo album
An arm chair by the table
A rocker
The three girls may carry in with them dolls, books, or whatever they may want

Note: The director may substitute any other poem and song for any scene. Tableau III may be too poignant; abbreviated or changed it may be less so. As a verse or so from poem "Resignation."

The theme refrain if printed on a card would make a fine motto to give to each member of the group.

Introduction: Longfellow the Fireside Poet

There is nothing which radiates so much of warmth in the home as the hearth with its light and cheer. Since the days when meals were prepared in the open fireplace, the hearth has become symbolic of home.

Poets have immortalized home fires. Longfellow is the most beloved of all the fireside poets. Many of his poems make reference to domestic peace and prosperity as well as tragic sorrow and death.

One of the most beautiful of these fireside poems of Longfellow's is "The Golden Milestone." In the Forum in Rome there is the ruins of a circular structure which formerly marked the center of the then civilized world. In the center of this structure Augustus placed a golden peg. From this point all distances were reckoned to every province of the empire, Asia Minor, Palestine, Spain, Gaul, and Britain. To all these points, roads were built making transportation rapid and efficient.

Longfellow has capitalized the idea of the Golden Milestone. With eloquence he tells us that our chimneys are our golden milestones. Each one is the central point from which the inmates of the home measure the distances to the world around them.

"Chimneys" is a dramatic presentation of The Golden Milestone, a series of tableaus showing what goes on under our chimneys the retrospection of old age, the romance and dreams of lovers, the tragedy of a loved one taken, the joy of domestic peace and tranquility, the precious home memories of the traveller.

Prelude, Poetic Setting

Pianist plays the refrain of Home Sweet Home.

Reader reads:

Leafless are the trees; their purple branches
Spread themselves abroad, like reefs of coral,
Rising silent
In the Red Sea of the winter sunset.

From the hundred chimneys of the village,
Like the afreet in the Arabian story,
Smoky columns
Tower aloft in the air of amber.

At the window winks the flickering firelight;
Here and there the lamps of evening glimmer,
Social watch-fires
Answering one another through the darkness.

On the hearth the lighted logs are glowing,
And like Ariel in the cloven pine-tree
For its freedom
Groans and sighs the air imprisoned in them.

Refrain of Home Sweet Home repeated.

Reader reads the Theme Refrain:

Each man's chimmey is his Golden Mile-Stone
Is the central point from which he measures
Every distance
Through the gateways of the world around him.

Tableau I

Quartet or soloist sings first verse of Home Sweet Home.

An old man enters and sits in the arm chair. While song is sung he looks at the old album. When poem "Footsteps of Angels" is read he is in reflective mood and looks into the fire.

Reader reads:

By the fireside there are old men seated,
Seeing ruined cities in the ashes,
Asking sadly
Of the Past what it can ne'er restore them.

Quartet sings: "When You and I Were Young Maggie," or "Silver Threads Among the Gold"
or "Long, Long Ago."

Reader reads: "Footsteps of Angels" - Longfellow
(1)

When the hours of Day are numbered
And the voices of the Night
Wake the better soul, that slumbered,
To a holy, calm delight;

(2)
Ere the evening lamps are lighted
And like phantoms grim and tall
Shadows from the fitful firelight
Dance upon the parlor wall;

(3)
Then the forms of the departed
Enter in at the open door;
The beloved, the true hearted,
Come to visit me once more;

(4)
He, the young and strong who cherished
Noble longings for the strife,
By the road side fell and perished,
Weary with the march of life!

(5)
They, the holy ones and weakly,
Who the cross of suffering bore,
Folded their pale hands so meekly,
Spake with us on earth no more!

(6)
And with them the Being Beauteous,
Who unto my youth was given,
More than all things else to love me,
And is now a saint in heaven.

(7)

With a slow and noiseless footstep
Comes that messenger divine,
Takes the vacant chair beside me,
Lays her gentle hand in mine.

(8)

And she sits and gazes at me
With those deep and tender eyes,
Like the stars, so still and saintlike,
Looking downward from the skies.

(9)

Uttered not, yet comprehended,
Is the spirit's voiceless prayer,
Soft rebukes in blessings ended,
Breathing from her lips of air.

(10)

Oh, though depressed and lonely,
All my fears are laid aside,
If I but remember only
Such as these have lived and died.

Curtain or Exit.

Tableau II

Piano plays chorus refrain of Home Sweet Home again as two lovers enter, arm in arm. If they are good actors they may merely dream while "I Love You Truly" is sung. Or they may look at photo book. She in chair and he on arm of it. For the poem they may admire her choice of silver for the new home.

Reader reads:

By the fireside there are youthful dreamers,
Building castles fair with stately stairways,
Asking blindly
Of the Future what it cannot give them.

Soloist sings: "I Love You Truly," or "O Promise Me"

He may sit by her side with his arm around her or some similar gesture. Or they may look at book.

Reader reads from "The Hanging of the Crane" - Longfellow
(She shows him silver pattern.)

O fortunate, a happy day,
When a new household finds its place
Among the myriad homes of earth,
Like a new star just sprung to birth,
And rolled on in its harmonious way
Into the boundless realms of space!

For two along there in the hall,
Is spread the table round and small;
Upon the polished silver shine
The evening lamps, but, more divine,
The light of love shines over all;
O love that says not mine and thine,
But ours, for ours is thine and mine.

They want no guests to come between
Their tender glances like a screen,
And tell them tales of land and sea,
And whatsoever may betide
The great forgotten world outside;
They want no guests; they needs must be
Each other's own best company.

Curtain or Exit

Tableau III

Refrain, Home, Home, Sweet, Sweet Home. Piano

Husband and wife enter. She sits in chair. He on arm. They pass to look at picture of little boy during singing of "Little Boy Blue." She fondles little shoes during reading of poem.

Reader reads:

By the fireside tragedies are acted
In whose scenes appear two actors only,
 Wife and husband
And above them God the sole spectator.

Soloist sings, "Little Boy Blue" Field
(They pass to look at the picture of the little son.)

Reader reads: "The Baby's Shoes" Maupin.

Lay them away stained by a mother's tears;
Precious keepsakes through the coming years.
 The baby's shoes, the tips now slightly worn,
 Their springheels frayed by running o'er the floor.
Lay them away with heart string wrenched and torn,
 For baby's feet will wear them never more.
But through the gloom of all the coming years
The baby's shoes will ope the fount of tears.

Lay them away! No more will baby's feet
Run to the gate with pattering music sweet.
 Upon the shores of brighter, endless day
 He stands. He smiles and waves his hand;
And after we have quit life's weary way
 We'll greet our baby in that better land.
And so we'll keep these shoes through all the years,
And they shall banish all our doubts and fears.

Curtain or Exit

Tableau IV

Refrain, Home Sweet Home.

Wife carrying a baby (a doll in blankets) and three girls with books and dolls. They are busy about the room. Girls in chairs, Mother rocks the baby as if singing a lullaby. While song is sung.

Reader reads:

By the fireside there are peace and comfort,
Wives and children, with fair, thoughtful faces,
 Waiting, watching
For a well-known footstep in the passage.

Quartet sings: "Sweet and Low"

At the close the father enters. The girls run to greet him. He sits in the arm chair. They climb on his lap, on arms and back of the chair. They kiss him. He tries to escape.

Reader Reads "The Children's Hour" - Longfellow

(1)

Between the dark and the daylight,
When the night is beginning to lower,
Comes a pause in the day's occupation
That is known as the Children's Hour.

(2)

I hear in the chamber above me
The patter of little feet,
The sound of a door that is opened
And voices soft and sweet.

(3)

From my study I see in the lamplight,
Descending the broad hall stair,
Grace Alice, and laughing Allegra,
And Edith with golden hair.

(4)

A whisper, and then a silence:
Yet I know by their merry eyes
They are plotting and planning together
To take me by surprise.

(5)

A sudden rush from the stairway,
A sudden raid from the hall.
By three doors left unguarded
They enter my castle wall!

(6)

They climb up into my turret
O'er the arms and back of my chair
If I try to escape, they surround me;
They seem to be everywhere.

(7)

They almost devour me with kisses,
Their arms about me entwine,
Till I think of the Bishop of Bingen
In his Mouse-Tower on the Rhine!

(8)

Do you think, O blue-eyed banditti,
Because you have scaled the wall,
Such an old mustache as I am
Is not a match for you all.

(9)

I have you fast in my fortress,
And will not let you depart,
But put you down in the dungeon
In the round-tower of my heart.

(10)

And there will I keep you forever,
Yes, forever and a day,
Till the walls shall crumble to ruin,
And molder in dust away!

Curtain or Exit

Piano refrain again.

Reader reads the Theme refrain -

Each man's chimney in his Golden Milestone;
Is the central point, from which he measures
Every distance
Through the gateways of the world around him.

Tableau V

Piano refrain.

An elderly woman dressed for travel carrying a suitcase enters. She is detached from her present surroundings seeing them only in fancy. She may sit in thoughtful mood or stand by the fire gazing into it. She may read a letter.

Reader:

In his farthest wandering still he sees it;
Hears the talking flame, the answering night wind,
As he heard them
When he sat with those who were but are not.

Quartet sings second and third verse of Home, Sweet Home.

Reader reads from "Rock Me To Sleep" - Townsend

Backward, turn backward, O Time in your flight,
Make me a child again just for tonight!
I have grown weary of dust and decay,
Wearing of flinging my soul wealth away.
Rock me to sleep, mother, - rock me to sleep.

Over my heart in the days that are flown,
No love like mother-love ever was known;
No other worship abides and endures, -
Faithful, unselfish, and patient like yours;
None like a mother can charm away pain
From the sick soul and the world-weary brain.
Slumber's soft calm o'er my heavy lids creep;
Rock me to sleep, mother, - rock me to sleep.

Come, let your brown hair, just lighted with gold,
Fall on your shoulders again as of old;
Let is drop over my forehead tonight,
Shading my faint eyes away from the light;
For with its sunny-edged shadows once more
Haply will throng the sweet visions of yore;
Lovingly, softly, its bright billows sweep; -
Rock me to sleep, mother, - rock me to sleep!

Curtain or Exit

Poetic Postlude

Refrain of Home Sweet Home

Reader:

Happy he whom neither wealth nor fashion,
Nor the march of the encroaching city,
Drives an exile
From the hearth of his ancestral homestead.

We may build more splendid habitations,
Fill our rooms with paintings and with sculptures,
But we cannot
Buy with gold the old associations.

Piano refrain.

Reader reads Theme Refrain:

Each man's chimney is his Golden Milestone
Is the central point, from which he measures
Every distance
Through the gateways of the world around him.

Quartet softly sings refrain.

Curtain or Exit

